

PURM 2027: Call for Papers

Special Issue: 'Who Holds the Relationship?' - Mentoring, Belonging, and Generative AI in Undergraduate Research

Background and rationale

Undergraduate research is where students' intellectual development, researcher identity formation, and sense of belonging are profoundly shaped by the quality of mentorship. Mentoring, extending beyond skill transmission and task oversight to function as a lived exemplar of relational pedagogy, is grounded in sustained human connection, trust, and mutual engagement. It is through these relationships that students come to feel they belong, not merely as participants in a task, but as emerging members of a research community. Whether enacted through dyadic or networked models, formal or informal structures, and involving faculty members, graduate students, or peer mentors, these relationships form the core infrastructure through which undergraduate research is supported and made successful.

New complexities in this relational educational practice have surfaced since the rapid proliferation of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) tools and systems. This raises crucial questions about the nature of research mentoring. As they are taken up by both mentors and mentees, GenAI systems have begun to function as active participants in knowledge production, interpretation, evaluation, and communication, procedures traditionally operationalized by humans alone. Consequently, students are no longer learning solely with and from their human mentors, but also alongside AI systems, which have the potential to reshape how students produce knowledge, evaluate, and take responsibility for the scholarship they create. At the same time, because GenAI systems hold biases, they can potentially reconfigure power relations, redistribute epistemic authority and responsibility, and reshape identities and expectations in mentoring relationships, especially for mentors and mentees with intersectional identities. Additionally, in some fields, GenAI use may short circuit the process of learning foundational disciplinary skills, which in turn complicates issues of authorship and intellectual development and challenges mutuality and sense of belonging.

In this context, mentoring must extend further to encompass ethical guidance, critical engagement with AI, and the cultivation of students' identities as emerging researchers in the age of GenAI, such that student researchers' sense of belonging is sustained and strengthened through the clearer affirmation of their intellectual agency and place within research communities.

This special issue seeks to explore how a relationship-rich approach to research mentoring might be sustained, reimagined, or strengthened in the age of GenAI. Instead of asking whether GenAI is beneficial or harmful, we ask contributors to confront a more demanding question: what happens to research mentoring when the foundations of mentor-mentee relationships are shifting?

Aims and Scope

We invite contributions that engage with, but are not limited to, the following themes:

Reconfigurations of mentoring relationships

- How does the presence of GenAI alter the dynamics between mentors and mentees?
- What happens to trust, mutuality, and epistemic responsibility when GenAI becomes part of the research mentoring process?

- In what ways does GenAI shape students' sense of belonging within research mentoring relationships, including how they participate in mentor-mentee interactions and how they are recognized as legitimate contributors within research communities?

Power, epistemic authority, and responsibility

- In what ways does GenAI reshape who is seen as a knower, a guide, or an authority in undergraduate research?
- How are responsibility and accountability negotiated when GenAI contributes to knowledge production, interpretation, evaluation, and communication?

Mentors' roles, identities, and practices

- How are mentors' roles, identities, and practices changing in response to and in relation to GenAI?
- How do mentors adapt their pedagogies, expectations, and forms of support?

Equity, inclusion, and access

- How does GenAI mediate access to intellectual and pastoral support for diverse student researchers, including neurodivergent students, second language learners, and those navigating intersecting identities?
- What new inequities or opportunities emerge for undergraduate research mentoring in this regard?
- What conditions enable or undermine students' sense of belonging within research mentoring relationships, and how might GenAI shape these?

Communication, language, and culture

- How does AI shape communication within mentoring relationships, particularly across linguistic and cultural differences?
- What are the implications for understanding, relationship building, and trust during research mentorship?

The boundaries of thinking and authorship

- How do mentors and mentees navigate the potentially blurred lines between human and AI-generated contributions?
- What does this mean for learning, originality, and researcher identity formation, which lie at the heart of research mentorship?

Mentoring as a site of resistance, adaptation, or transformation

- How can mentoring practices respond creatively, reflexively, and critically to AI, rather than simply accommodating or rejecting it?
- What new technologies, databases, and tools are used within research mentoring to engage with, regulate or to circumvent GenAI tools? How do these choices reflect mentoring priorities, values, and pedagogical approaches?

- How do we evaluate and respond to the ethical, environmental, cognitive, and pedagogical costs of GenAI within research mentoring, and how do these considerations shape our mentoring practices with students?
- How do we build or adapt mentoring relationships in which students feel equipped and motivated to engage authentically with their own thinking, rather than deferring to generative AI?

This special issue aims to move beyond binary debates about AI and instead provide a nuanced, empirically grounded, and theoretically rich exploration of research mentoring in a time of rapid technological change. It seeks to offer insights that are not only critical but also reflexive and constructive, illuminating how mentoring in undergraduate research can remain relationally grounded, ethically attentive, and educationally meaningful, sustaining the conditions under which all students can develop a genuine sense of belonging as emerging researchers.

Submission Guidelines

PURM is an open-access, multidisciplinary, peer-reviewed online journal supporting the mission of undergraduate research and the programs that strive to provide undergraduate students opportunities to participate in scholarly activities with faculty mentors. PURM's unique focus on the process of undergraduate research and mentoring rather than the products of these activities provides a space for the growing undergraduate research community to share experiences, opportunities, concerns, and challenges in a rigorous, professional venue.

PURM welcomes a wide variety of article types, including Dialogues (co-authored pieces written by faculty mentors and mentees), Student Perspectives, Research Articles (literature reviews or original empirical research studies), and Invited Viewpoints. For this special issue, we also welcome the submission of Case Studies and Practitioner Pieces (e.g., program descriptions or novel idea descriptions). Submissions may have student authors or co-authors. For more information about the types of articles accepted by PURM and for submission guidelines, please visit the website at <https://www.elon.edu/u/academics/undergraduate-research/purm/for-authors/>.

To be considered for the special issue on **'Who Holds the Relationship?' - Mentoring, Belonging, and Generative AI in Undergraduate Research**, please submit manuscripts by July 15, 2026. Submissions can be emailed directly to purm@elon.edu. For questions about the special issue, please reach out to the guest editors:

- Dr. Tom Ritchie: tritchie3@elon.edu / tom.ritchie@warwick.ac.uk
- Dr. Brandon Sheridan: bsheridan4@elon.edu
- Dr. Yanyan Li: Yanyan.Li.1@warwick.ac.uk

Questions about PURM and all other inquiries may be directed to Dr. Janet Myers, Managing Editor of PURM (jmyers@elon.edu).

Submission Timeline

Call for papers: April 15, 2026

Submission deadline: submission deadline extended to August 3, 2026

Manuscripts under review: July-August 2026

Manuscripts returned to authors for revision: September-October 2026

Revised manuscripts due: November 1, 2026